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Letter dated 23 April 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to inform you that on 20 April 2008, a Spanish fishing boat, the *Playa de Bakio*, was captured by unidentified persons on the high seas, some 230 miles off the coast of Somalia. The vessel carried a crew of 26, of whom 13 are Spanish nationals; the remaining 13 are from Ghana, Madagascar, Senegal and the Seychelles.

On 20 April 2008, at 11 a.m. GMT, the crew of the *Playa de Bakio* were captured by a group of about a dozen heavily armed and organized individuals aboard a fast launch. The assailants used rocket-propelled grenades that seriously damaged the vessel without affecting its seaworthiness or causing bodily injury. The assailants subsequently took the vessel and its crew by force to the Somali coast. The boat is currently anchored near the port of Hobyo and the crew are still being held against their will.

The Government of Spain immediately contacted the highest authorities of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, who have demonstrated their solidarity and cooperation, with a view to the prompt, non-violent release of the abducted sailors and the vessel. The Spanish Government has also contacted the African Union, other relevant organizations and relevant Governments on this matter. In addition, in order to monitor developments in the situation more closely, the Government of Spain has decided to dispatch a detachment of the Spanish navy to the region.

The Government of Spain strongly condemns the illegal seizure of the *Playa de Bakio* and fervently hopes that there will be no repetition of unfortunate incidents such as those which, regrettably, have occurred recently in the waters off the Somali coast and have been reflected in the Secretary-General's reports and in the relevant resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and the International Maritime Organization.

In that regard, the Spanish Government would like to stress the need for the international community to take joint, coherent action under United Nations auspices in order to prevent and punish such acts, which jeopardize the delivery and distribution of humanitarian assistance, contribute to the destabilization of the region and pose a threat to the safety of international maritime traffic.

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The Spanish authorities therefore wish to place this information before the Security Council as a contribution to the Council's work and discussions aimed at addressing effectively the serious illegal acts that affect the safety of the international sea lanes in the waters off Somalia.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Juan Antonio **Yáñez-Barnuevo**